

peared; they were sore afraid, but the angel said unto them, "Fear not; for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the God. And suddenly there were with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Jesus the Christ heralded forth by the angels of God; His birth was proclaimed in the anthems of the celestial choir. *Gloria excelsus dei*, was the strain begun by the cherubims of heaven. Echoed and re-echoed throughout the universe. The Christians today catch the echo of the strain of that angelic song, and they resound it from every church and sanctuary in the land, until its reverberations encircle the earth and reach the very gates of heaven; *Gloria excelsus dei*. These things are written that we might believe and live. Let not the glories of this scene be destroyed by the dark act that follows; quick, ring the bell and let the curtain drop.

Act the fifth.—Jesus Christ has fallen a victim of ingratitude. Behold the betrayal of the Master by a disciple; surrounded by a band of men armed with staves as though He were a desperado. Arrested He is lead away to the judgment hall; there before his blood-thirsty accusers He is condemned to die the death of the cross by their cries. Delivered into the hands of His enemies, He is reviled and buffeted; he is robed in purple in abject mockery. He is crowned in derision. And scourged, thus heaping injury upon insult, He is led to Calvary. Surrounded by soldiers and a wild populace He slowly wends His way up the little hill. Mark well the scene. Enemies thirsting for His blood, soldiers with sword and shield brandishing in the sunlight, and the innocent Jesus led as a lamb to the slaughter; the brow of calvary is reached. The cross is laid upon the ground; four rough nails lay with it,—spikes to be driven through his hands and feet. And there is a deep hole dug in the ground for the planting of the cross.

Four rugged Roman soldiers with heavy hammers in their hands step forward. The loving Saviour is laid upon the cross; four nails are lifted to their intended places; four arms are raised to strike them deep into those hands which never did aught but good, into those feet which never led but to places of need. Thump, go the first blows; the blood, the crimsoned life-blood, starts from the wounds. And thump, thump, go the hammers until the nails are driven deep into the wood. Then the cross is lifted and carried to its receptacle in the ground, here it is raised up and then let fall into the place dug for it; a dull thump as it strikes the bottom shocking every nerve in that weary body.

Nature itself will not follow its wonted course. The Sun is darkened and the earth is shook to its very center. The Lord is suffering upon the tree.

Worlds upon worlds, and eternal things—  
Hang on thy anguish, O King of Kings.

He has died the ignominious death of the cross. He is taken down. He is laid in a tomb hewn out of solid rock. The door of the tomb is sealed and Roman soldiers guard it. What a horrible murder! What cruel outrages upon the Savior of mankind! Taunted, mocked, spurned, tortured, numbered with thieves, murderers and seditionists He passes from the stage for a brief time. So ring the bell and let the curtain drop.

Act the sixth.—Christ buried, and Christ's tomb guarded by soldiers. One night has passed, and no sign of rising from the grave. The second night is passed and no sign. The third night is here, and the pickets keep their vigil. Midnight is here, three o'clock, four o'clock, then the first rays of the dawning day are announced from the east. Daybreak is on and, with the hurrying streaks of morning light comes the flutter of angel wings. The guards hear them not; neither do they see the angelic form. The morning light of the first day of the week and the angelic messenger reach the tomb of Jesus at the same time. The angel rolls away the stone. Christ, the jealously guarded prisoner of the tomb, arises in His majesty and power. See, see, who is it

coming forth! Jesus Christ the crucified. His glory strikes down the soldiers as dead men. The Roman soldiery could not hold Him in the prison, the sealed tomb of solid rock could not secure Him, the powers of Hades could not contain Him. A risen, glorified Christ.

True He is risen from the grave, but He will rise yet higher. Reunited with His disciples He communes with them forty days. Then He takes them to the mount of Olives and while blessing them He is taken up. Up He goes, higher and higher until He is but a mere speck in the skies. Finally He disappears; while the men of Galilee stood there gazing at Him rising, they suddenly saw two men in white apparel standing by them, one on either side. And methinks the way of Christ from earth to heaven was lined on either side by angels. "This same Jesus which is taken up into heaven will come again in like manner."

As He ascends He shouts back to a redeemed world, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live and he that liveth and believeth shall never die." "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." Behold, a resurrected and ascended Christ who will come again. But His second coming will eclipse the grandeur of His former acts. Then, ring the bell and let the curtain drop!

Act the last.—The time is at hand. "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." Behold, He cometh with the Host of heaven and with a mighty shout and the sounding of the trumpets. All kindred of the earth shall hear His voice, and they shall arise from their sleeping beds.

From the sands of Asia and the mountains of California, from the polar snows and the tropical regions, from hills and vales, from land and sea, they come an innumerable multitude. He leads the way to the judgment seat. But ah, there are those, I fear, who must hear that awful word depart. Depart, depart, depart to your doom. Shut out from the presence of God forever and ever. Cast into the depths of outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "In as much as ye did it not unto one of the least of these ye did it not unto me." Away into your deserved punishment! God help us to avert such a doom. Ring the bell and let the curtain drop over these forever.

But here are those who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They have believed and have been faithful and have received a crown of life. Everlasting life in the Paradise of God. There around the throne of God and the Lamb, under the rainbow of God's love they shall live and reign forever more. Their song will be addressed "unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sin, unto Him be the glory forever amen." Then catching up the hosannas of heaven they fall down before the throne singing the songs of redemption until the domes of heaven ring. *Gloria excelsus dei!* glory to God in the highest. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." Ring the bell but never let the curtain drop. Ring the bells of heaven. This is a never ending scene.

"Had we been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun;  
We've no less days to sing God's praise,  
Than when we first begun."

May this be our portion—Amen.

#### The Heavenly Register.

There are frequent references in the Bible to an extraordinary register. In it are enrolled a mighty multitude of names, out of many kindreds and tongues and nationalities; the rich and the poor meet together in that "Lamb's Book of life." We may reasonably hope that by the end of all things a majority of the human race will be enrolled there, for the Gospel of Calvary is to be no failure. If hell be likened to a "lake," then heaven may be likened to an ocean.

Who are registered in this celestial roll-book? The answer is, all who are alive in Christ Jesus,

whether in this world or in the better country. It is the book of the living. It contains the names of all the live men and all the live women now on this globe, or in the realms of glory. "You hath he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins. He that hath not the Son, hath not life." Here in this world, as Maclaren has well said, "There are living people and dead ones side by side, like that ghastly imagination in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, of the corpse and the living man pulling at the same rope. Now, many of us stand shoulder to shoulder with dead men."

Our blessed Lord once referred to this celestial register when he bade his disciples rejoice, not because the spirits were subject unto them, but because their names were written in heaven. Paul also referred to it when he spoke of Clement and other fellow-laborers whose names are in the Book of Life. In his sublime vision of the last day, John tells us that he saw the dead, both the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. Farther on he tells us that no one should enter the New Jerusalem, save those "who are written in the Lamb's book of life"; all others are doomed to the "Second death." All this tremendous and portentous imagery may well suggest the vital question to everybody, how can my name be sure of a place in that celestial register?

Certainly it is not enrolled there by any arbitrary decree of a just and loving God, irrespective of character and conduct. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath life; therefore every name is self-registered. Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, gives a vivid picture of a palace, on whose roof walk troops of the shining ones. Beside the door way is a table, and a book, and an inkhorn, with a gang of armed men who seek to drive back all comers. A man of stout countenance who approaches the door, and exclaims to the scribe "Set down my name sir!" and hewing with his sword right and left, and cleaving his way into the palace, amid the shouts and triumphant songs of those who are on the parapets. "Then Christian smiled, and said, Verily, I know the meaning of this." The meaning is very simple, viz.: that every one who would be saved, must lay hold on eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another equally important question may be raised: Does every name remain there immovably? This question touches one of the ancient battlegrounds of doctrinal controversy; but let us face certain undoubted statements. God's secret purposes are hidden, but we are told of certain persons who had the name that they were living, and yet were dead. In the sixty-ninth psalm we read that terrible malediction. "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living." Again in the third chapter of the apocalypse, it is declared: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." This very expression, that God will not blot out certain names, implies that others may be blotted from that celestial register. There is certainly a prodigious meaning covered under that black word "blot," and to my mind it is a very wholesome meaning. It means a solemn warning to every professed Christian. It means just what wise old Dr. Archibald Alexander used to say to us theological students: "Young men, if any of you die while in a state of backsliding, I won't answer for your salvation."

God's word shines with precious promises to those who endure unto the end; yet it flames with terrible warnings to us all to beware lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to have come short of it. For one, I believe in the glorious doctrine of the perseverance of the true saints; but I believe also in the perseverance of the devil, and the constant perseverance of that wretched "old man" in the heart which Paul kept boxing and beating and bruising clear on to his last hour. Paul said to his Corinthian brethren, "Ye are being saved if (mark that significant word if) 'ye keep hold of the Gospel which I preached unto you.' As long as

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